Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Evidence of the Great Vowel Shift in English Poetry of the Period

Doklady Velké hláskové změny v dobové anglické poezii

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval/a samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval/a všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům. I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá Velkou hláskovou změnou, která probíhala přibližně mezi patnáctým a osmnáctým stoletím v britské angličtině. Analýza v této bakalářské práci byla provedena manuálně na vzorku vybrané poezie z daných období. Při hledání příkladů ovlivněných Velkou hláskovou změnu byl brán ohled i na jiné hláskové změny probíhající přibližně ve stejném období jako Velká hlásková změna, jako například krácení samohlásek.

V analýze bylo zpozorováno, že počet zastoupení jednotlivých hláskových změn se od sebe navzájem velmi liší. Jedna určitá změna byla hojně zpozorována v dílech všech vybraných básníků, zatímco jiná nebyla nalezena ani jednou. Pomocí grafů se zobrazily výsledky manuální analýzy, které byly srovnány s předpokládanou chronologií Velké hláskové změny.

Klíčová slova: Velká hlásková změna, rým, poezie, stará angličtina, střední angličtina, moderní angličtina

Abstract

This BA thesis is dealing with the Great Vowel Shift which occurred roughly between the fifteenth and eighteenth century in British English. Analysis in this thesis was carried out manually on a sample of selected poetry of the period. While obtaining examples affected by the Great Vowel Shift other changes occurring approximately around the same period as the Great Vowel Shift such as shortening were taken into account.

In the analysis it was observed that the number of representations of individual shifts is very different from each other. One specific shift was encountered widely in the works of all selected poets while another shift was not encountered once. The results of the manual analysis were displayed in graphs which were then compared to the presumed chronology of the Great Vowel Shift.

Key words: The Great Vowel Shift, rhyme, poetry, Old English, Middle English, Modern English

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List of abbreviations

GVS – the Great Vowel Shift

IPA – International Phonetic Alphabet

ME – Middle English

ModE – Modern English

OE – Old English

PDE – Present-Day English

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1. Introduction

The sound changes in the history of a language are not easy to observe. In the case of proto-languages reconstruction and comparative methods are used, in languages with non-standardized spelling that there is written evidence of, orthography can be consulted. In the modern period there are commentaries by language scholars of the day and later on even recordings. However, there is a problem with observing changes that happened before or on the brink of standardization of orthography. This is a period when there were no recordings and there is a very small number of linguistic commentaries. The non-standardized orthography of the period is also probematic as the sound changes are difficult to prove from writing. One of the remaining possibilities, however, is to recover the pronunciation from poetry.

The Great Vowel Shift has shaped the nature of the long stressed vowels of English since the period of Late Middle English, until Early Modern English. There have been more sound changes overlapping with the Great Vowel Shift (GVS), however after the GVS has ended at the end of the 18th century, it has been the most profound of all of those developments and it has affected linguistic structures beyond phonology. Nevertheless, phonology was the most deeply impacted language level because the whole Middle English long vowel system was transformed. The mid vowels got raised and changed into high vowels and vowels that have already been high got diphthongized. The GVS, being a chain shift, had many changes happening at the same time or over the course of its development. Each of those changes was affected by or affected other shifts.

What may be problematic while dealing with the GVS, is the fact that the shift has only affected pronunciation but not spelling. Before the invention of printing press, there was little standardization of spelling and one word could be found in many orthographic forms even in the same text. As the scribes were writing their texts, especially the long ones, they did not check whether there has already been the same word written and in which form. Since the printing press arrived and the spelling and orthography became standardized, it has not changed much and there have been few shifts in the spelling system of English. For this reason it is

difficult to show the process of the GVS by simply reading the texts of the period. However, it can be observed in word puns or in rhymes.

This thesis will try to observe the occurrence of the GVS through examining poems by various poets of the periods in which the GVS took place. The chosen poets are Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, John Skelton and Edmund Spenser. Each of them is a representative of a different era and for that reason, examples of the progress of the GVS might be found in their selected poems. All of those poets together cover most of the span of the GVS and each of the chosen poets have somehow contributed to the general nature of poetry. Chaucer has developed his own rhyming scheme based on an already existing ottava rima; Skelton has also developed his own verse form, which is based on doggerel; Spenser's contribution to poetry lays in the invention of the Spenserian stanza; and Shakespeare has provided the world with a transformation of a sonnet, which became known as the Shakespearian sonnet. Thanks to the fact that each of these poets uses his own specific poetic devices, the observation of the GVS instances might be more objective but it may be more difficult to compare them mutually.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Great Vowel Shift

2.1.1. Brief Overview

The Great Vowel Shift is a sound change that has affected the pronunciation of long stressed vowels from the period of Late Middle English to Early Modern English. Its effects on English phonology have been very deep even though the chronology of the change is difficult to determine. It has most likely begun in the fifteenth century and continued until the 1700s (Arnovick and Brinton, 2011: 329). The GVS is a shift of long stressed vowels, which have been raised in articulation (Arnovick and Brinton, 2011: 327-328). If the vowel has already been high, it got diphthongized. Some of the new diphthongs have already been similar in Middle English to their Present-Day English (PDE)[1] values. According to Roger Lass, "the old /i:/ and /u:/ in *bite*, *out* ended up as diphthongs approaching their modern values" (Lass, 2000: 11). The Great Vowel Shift has been a series of shifts, but all of the vowels have not shifted the same amount of times and at the same time. The shifting of the vowels appeared not only in some but in all phonological environments, which makes it an unrestricted shift.

All Middle English (ME) long vowels have changed into something else in PDE (Lass, 2000: 72). However, looking at the shift more closely, it can be seen that the vowels have undergone a series of developments on their way to reaching their today's forms.

[1] In the entirety of this thesis, the PDE that is being referred to is Received Pronunciation, which has evolved from the South Eastern dialect.

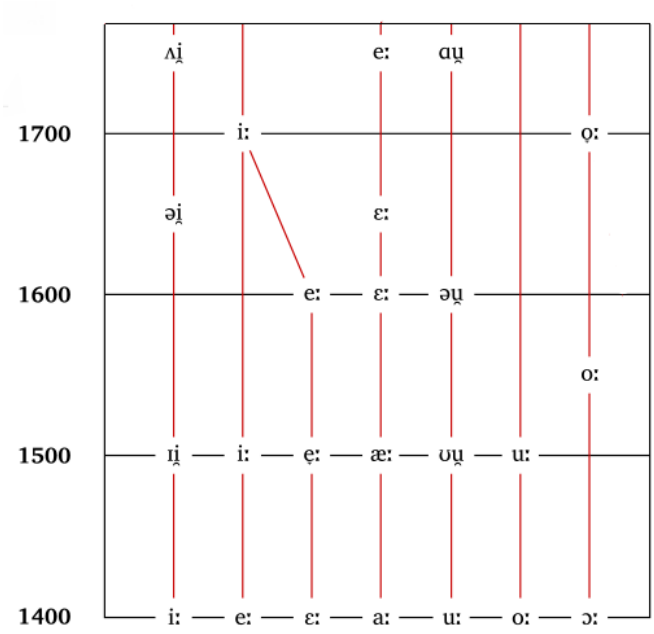


Table 1: General overview of the Great Vowel Shift (Wikipedia, 2019)

Table 1 shows the vowels in their initial form at the beginning of the GVS and in their final form at the end of the GVS, which was at the end of the 18th century. The original high vowels /iː/[2] and /uː/ changed into rising diphthongs with low or mid-low first element /ʌi̯/ and /au̯/ respectively and mid-front vowels /eː/ and /ɛː/ have merged into one high vowel /iː/ by the beginning of the 18th century. Mid-back vowel /oː/ got raised into high back vowel /uː/ and the low front vowel /aː/ has raised into mid-high vowel /eː/ (Wikipedia, "Great Vowel Shift", 2019).

The GVS is a chain shift, which means that every sub-change affects or is affected by other changes. The mechanism of the change is being perceived from two different perspectives – either as a drag chain or as a push chain. Drag chain is a kind of change in which one sound moves from its original place, leaving a gap, which an existing sound fills. The gap left behind this sound is filled by another one and so on. Push chain, on the other hand, means that one sound moves into the area of another sound and the original then moves away before the two sounds can merge into one. The expelled sound then expels another sound from its original place and so on. The changes must have happened over the same period of time because if they had taken place separately, some of the vowels would have been merged together and gaps would have been left behind some shifted vowels (Arnovick and Brinton, 2011: 328).

[2] All phonetic transcription in this thesis is written in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

There have been more developments to the language than just the shifting of long vowels in the same period. Short vowels and diphthongs have also undergone some changes. Some of the short vowels have been lowered, for example /e/ into /ɛ/ in the word *bed*. Some diphthongs changed into monophthongs and a new type of diphthong had appeared during this time. This new type of centring diphthong can be seen in words like *here* and *there* that could be read as /hiːə/ and /ðeə/, respectively (McMahon, 2006: 154-155). These changes, however, have not shaped the language as a whole because they have not affected as many phonemes and therefore words, but especially, because these minor changes have not influenced the overall structure of the phonological system of the language, as opposed to the GVS, which helped to eliminate length as a distinctive phonological feature.

The GVS has had two crucial effects on the English language. As mentioned above, one of those effects was the elimination of the difference between long and short vowels. This differentiation has been previously typical of the phonological system of Old English (OE) and ME. According to Arnovick, long vowels have either been replaced by diphthongs or by tense vowels, which now stood in opposition to lax short vowels. The whole vowel system has undergone a considerable transformation from a system based on quantity to one based on quality. Even though Modern English (ModE) has long and short vowels, in that case it is only an allophonic distinction that could be predicted by the quality of the vowel, syllabic structure and stress placement. The second result of the GVS is the complicated spelling system which will be further discussed in the following section (Arnovick and Brinton, 2011: 332).

2.1.2. Great Vowel Shift and the Orthography

One of the problems with the GVS is that the changes only affected the pronunciation of the words but not the orthography. The occurrence of the shift cannot therefore be observed from the writing, but it can be observed in rhymes, for instance. Before the GVS took place, Old English had a predominantly phonological spelling and there did not exist any “silent” letters. Spelling of stressed vowels in OE and ME largely correlated with the way they were pronounced, although the situation in ME was much more complicated than in OE. Before the invention of printing press, there was little standardization of spelling so one word could have

multiple different forms, even in the same text. It was only with the appearance of the printing press in the 15th century that the orthography reached levels of standardization we associate with spelling today. Even later on in the following centuries, when long vowels kept shifting, the spelling system did not follow suit to record altered pronunciations. The spelling that is being currently used for stressed vowels is principally still the spelling of the vowels before the shift (Arnovick and Brinton, 2011: 333).

The reason why after the GVS orthography and spelling do not correspond is that through these vowel changes, every vowel has at least two unique values – quantity and quality. In Early ME the reorganization of vowel quantity limited its use as a phonological distinctive feature that differentiated between words and morphemes. The GVS was an outcome of such restrictions as it presented new qualitative variations between the long vowels that were previously separated only through length. These vowels had to be differentiated through quality instead of through quantity. A good example of this would be the short vowel /ɔ/ and the long vowel /ɔː/, which were contrasted before the shift mainly in quantity and after the beginning of the GVS started to be contrasted through quality as /ɔ/ and /oʊ/ respectively. (Rastorgueva, 2003: 203) April McMahon provides examples of different vowel pronunciations that are a result of the two distinctive values: "/…/ in Chaucer's time an <a> spelling could only be pronounced as long or short /a/ /…/, and an <i> only long or short /i/ /… today/ <a>, for example can be /æ/ in *apple*, /eɪ/ in *name*, or /ɑː/ in *father*, and <i> can be /ɪ/ in *ill* /…/ or /aɪ/ in *time* /…/". Each vowel symbol has short and long values and for this reason the values do not match the vowel quality anymore (McMahon, 2006: 157-158).

How difficult it can be to recreate a correct pronunciation at the time could be seen by examining some words that appear in the *Paston Letters*. *Paston Letters* is a collection of letters that were written in the 15th century by the Paston family. To this day the *Paston Letters* are the biggest surviving collection of English correspondence of the period, which is valuable to linguists and philologists as it is evidence of the English language at an essential period in its evolution (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, "Paston Letters", 2019). In ME "ou" and "ow" spellings were being used for an /uː/ sound and "oo" spelling for an /oː/ sound. During the 14th

and 15th century, which is roughly the period in which the *Paston Letters* were written, in the initial stages of the GVS /oː/ began raising towards /uː/ and the original /uː/ was getting diphthongized. Since this was happening, words with etymological /oː/ could be seen written with a symbol suitable for the /uː/ sound. There are words in *Paston Letters* that are written as *doun* (in PDE *done*) and *goud* (in PDE *good*) that were still probably pronounced as /doːn/ and /goːd/ in ME. As Roger Lass points out, the letters "ou" were usually being used for /uː/ sound. There are two possible explanations to what might have happened. It might mean that the shift from /oː/ to /uː/ has been completed by the time the letters were written or that the /oː/ sound has already been raised enough for the author to write the symbol usually used for /uː/ (Lass, 2000: 65-66).

2.1.3. The Beginning of the Great Vowel Shift

As mentioned in Chapter 2.1.1., the Great Vowel Shift is a chain shift. There is, however, a question whether it has been a push chain or a drag chain. Each of these opinions is linked to a different linguist. While Otto Jespersen believes the change to be a drag chain, Karl Luick believes it to be a push chain. Both of the linguists agree that the changes were taking place at the same time and that they were unified, but they differ in opinions on what was the initial change. The GVS being mainly a raising and diphthongizing shift there is a question of what happened first – raising of mid vowels or diphthongizing of high vowels?

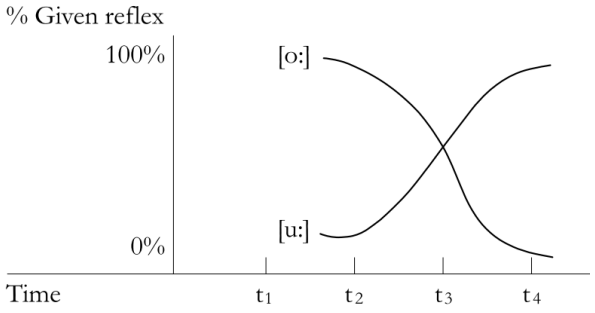
Karl Luick believed that the first impulse was the raising of the mid vowels /eː/ and /oː/, which while in raising pushed the high vowels /iː/ and /uː/ out of their place and then the original spots got filled up by low vowels. Otto Jespersen believed that the initial change was the diphthongization of ME high vowels /iː/ and /uː/ and after that the mid vowels /eː/ and /oː/ got raised into the vacant places left behind the original high vowels. The push chain suggested by Luick was not a smooth progression but rather a reciprocal association. That means that after the mid vowels got raised and pushed away the high vowels, the empty mid vowel positions would be filled with low vowels in a drag chain.

According to Lass, Jespersen's approach seems to be the right answer. If the mid vowels /eː/ and /oː/ were first raised to high vowels /iː/ and /uː/, the newly created sounds would most

likely have merged with the original /iː/ and /uː/ sounds. Therefore, the diphthongization had most likely happened before the raising of the vowels. Not taking in account the progression of the change, the thing that triggered the GVS could be either diphthongization or raising of vowels. The process of diphthongization of high vowels could drag mid vowels up and the gradual raising of mid vowels could push the high vowels out and diphthongize them later. Nevertheless, there is no strong evidence to prove that either of these changes preceded the other one. First textual evidence which is already showing both shifts appeared in the 15th century.

It can be seen that there is an imbalance in the development of ME vowel pairs /uː/ and /oː/, and /iː/ and /eː/. Each of these pairs has undergone a different evolution in the northern dialect and in the rest of the dialects. Lass goes on into detail about the differences in the North dialect, where there was for example a failure to diphthongize the ME /uː/. There is no consistency in undiphthongized ME /iː/ in all dialects. A high vowel could be diphthongized only if the spot of the mid vowel below was filled by a vowel that could be raised when the shift began. If the spot below the high vowel was empty and there was no vowel to push, no diphthongization could happen. According to Jespersen, there is no reason for the preservation of /uː/ and for the diphthongization of both ME high vowels to be asymmetrical (Lass, 2000: 74-77).

As mentioned before, the process of the GVS in time is one of the questions linguists are dealing with. Lass provides an analysis through which he is trying to establish a more specific time frame. He argues that any change, e.g. change from ME /oː/ to /uː/ simply means that at certain time "t1" all representatives of a specific category had /oː/ and at certain time "t2" they had /uː/. It is not enough to only show the initial and the final stages of a shift because the process of the shift is much more complex. A change usually starts as a variable, for instance a novelty that speaker produces, using some old and some new tokens. How Lass describes the change can be seen in Graph 1 below.



Graph 1: Change from /o:/ to /u:/ (Lass, 2000: 78)

At "t1" there is the original /o:/ and absolutely no new /u:/, by the time "t2" /u:/ is expanding but /o:/ is still dominant. "T3" is the time in which both old and new forms are balanced and "t4" is the opposite of "t1". This clearly shows that this change is not simply a replacement of the old form, which would then be gone completely but it shows that in a certain point in time, the two forms co-existed together. It is probable that all words in the lexicon had their own profile like this, only in different time periods. These changes might have started in an exact social or other group and then might have expanded (or not have expanded) into other groups. In this case, the shift might have started at "t1" in one group and at "t2" in another group. Then the changes would not be synced, and the concluded change might include different social arrangements as well. This leads back to the previously mentioned spelling from *The Paston Letters*. The existence of the word *good* spelled as *goud* does not necessarily mean that the ME /o:/ has been raised to /u:/, neither that the raising has been completed by the time the texts have surfaced (Lass, 2003: 77-79).

2.1.4. Great Vowel Shift and Poetry

Poetry of a certain period is one of the possible ways to identify vowel changes. A rhyme is generally based on an identical vowel, or in certain instances more than one vowel. If a rhyme is expected because of the rhyme pattern but the vowels are not identical it is either a vowel change or an eye-rhyme. Originally there might have been a vowel that created a rhyme but after the GVS the vowel shifted, and the rhyme disappeared. Such differences can be observed in poems by a number of poets of the period as will be shown in the empirical part of this thesis on examples from poems by William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Geoffrey Chaucer and John Skelton.

It is important to define what the basic types of rhymes are. A full rhyme refers to the instantly recognized form, e.g. true/blue. A near rhyme refers to rhymes that are almost the same but not exactly, e.g. lap/shape. Identical rhymes are rhymes where the word rhymes with itself and an eye rhyme refers to rhymes that at a glance look like they are going to rhyme but they are only spelled the same, e.g. love/prove (Adams, 2003: 199). Full rhyme has a final stressed vowel and all sounds following that vowel are identical. In the most emphatic form of a full rhyme the stress falls on the final syllable and it is called a masculine rhyme, e.g. got/not. In opposition to the masculine rhyme stands a feminine rhyme. Such rhyme has a stress on the next-to-last syllable, e.g. stable/fable. (Hurley, 2012: 47) There are many more different types of "imprecise" rhymes than there are of perfect rhymes. Among imprecise rhymes there is, for instance, an imperfect rhyme that is between a stressed and unstressed vowel, e.g. sing/staring; or there is a half rhyme in which only the final consonants are identical, e.g. ill/shell. Rhymes can also be analysed based on their position in the line of the verse – they are either end rhymes or internal rhymes. Internal rhymes appear somewhere in the middle of the line and end rhymes appear at the tail of the line. (Hurley, 2012: 48)

Partial rhyme stands in an opposition to full rhyme and it is a rhyme that almost rhymes but not fully. A rhyme needs to include the same sounds at the ends of certain parts of a language (e.g. the ends of the lines in a poem). Those parts of the language should be repeated, and it should be obvious how complete the repetition is. This repetition is placed on the nucleus of the rhyming syllables and on the syllables that follow. In full and in identical rhymes the repeated sounds are the same, whereas the repetition in partial rhymes is established only on the final consonant (Hanson, 2002: 210).

A modern reader might encounter non-functioning rhymes, i.e. rhymes that do not rhyme. There are many possible explanations for this, one of those explanations being that the rhymes which do not rhyme in PDE, did not rhyme even at the time of their creation. It might be the case in some instances that the rhyme was simply never a full rhyme but only a partial rhyme. Kökeritz argues in his book on Shakespeare that number of rhymes that are partial today must have already been partial when Shakespeare wrote them but there are also rhymes that

would have been full in Shakespeare's dialect (Hanson, 2002: 213-215). Another reason for the non-functioning rhyme might be that it is simply an eye rhyme, as for instance in Shakespeare's "Sonnet 18" date/temperate.

Unlike Shakespeare, whose work is full of partial rhymes, Chaucer used full rhymes for the aesthetic pleasure of the reader/listener. Chaucer's poems were very often recited so they had to be pleasing to the ear. Spenser was one of the first poets who favoured working with similar sounds instead of identical ones. Skelton preferred using a single-rhyme pattern repeated for as long as he wanted, e.g. nought/sought/brought/wrought/thought. Later on, poets began to be interested in rhyme mainly as a rhythmic device and how it marked poetic units such as the line. As a result of this shift of focus and the growing interest in the phonological past of the language, the differences in vowels in rhymes are beginning to be studied systematically (Hanson, 2002: 214).

3. Material and Method

3.1. Material

The first criterion was choosing the authors whose work would cover most of the period of the GVS. The authors used in this thesis cover the period from the late 14th/early 15th century until the beginning of the 17th century. The second criterion was to choose those authors that produced a larger sample of rhymed verses, because rhymes are the essential component of the analysis. With this in mind I selected the following poets: William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, Geoffrey Chaucer and John Skelton. The choice of poems from Shakespeare, Spenser and Chaucer has been quite easy. Shakespeare's sonnets are known to rhyme but similarly famous are his non-functioning rhymes, which is interesting for the purposes of this thesis. With Chaucer and Spenser, the best-known long poems were chosen. As John Skelton has not written a poem nearly as long as Spenser has, I picked a selection of his poems.

3.1.1. Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342/1343-1400)

Geoffrey Chaucer was an English poet, who was born in the early 1340s and died October 25, 1400 in London. According to the Encyclopædia Britannica, Chaucer was the first person to find the real essence of the English language. He was not only a poet but also a diplomat and civil servant and contributed gravely to the management of public affairs. His best-known work, *The Canterbury Tales*, is considered to be one of the best poetic works in English. In his work, he likes to contrast humorous scenes with crucial philosophical questions.

There is no record of his being born nor is there a record of his education. From his later writings it is obvious that he knew Latin and Italian, and also that he has been introduced to the most important books of his and previous periods. He wrote *The Canterbury Tales* in the 1390s and this long poem became his most considerable literary achievement (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2019). *The Canterbury Tales* combine a mixture of various storylines and narrative styles. This can be most plainly seen in the clear distinction of the storytellers and their relationships in the process of telling the stories. *The Canterbury Tales* is a collection of different stories that are being told by multiple narrators/storytellers. Chaucer's storytellers

range across all the different social classes – there is a businessman, a squire, a poor but pure person, etc (Benson, 2004: 127).

It is interesting to see the evolution of the rhyme-schemes Chaucer used. At first, he was using short couplets, then he tried using terza rima (aba, bcb, cdc), which was used widely by Dante. He later found Boccaccian ottava rima (abababcc) the most helpful. From this emerged the Chaucerian rhyme scheme (ababbcc), which rhymes seven, instead of eight lines (Wallace, 2004: 43). This rhyme scheme is called rhyme royal, it is written in iambic pentameter and it is the same verse form that Chaucer uses in some of the stories in *The Canterbury Tales* and also in another of his famous poems *Troilus and Criseyde* (Adams, 2003: 81).

Language used by Chaucer was the language spoken in London. The London dialect has later developed into Standard English, so Chaucer was fundamental in that sense (Cannon, 2004: 235). Thanks to the period in which Chaucer was wiring his poetry, he had flexibility in the creating of metrical patterns. ME had a number of alternative forms engaged throughout variety of categories, e.g. any word with a final -e that could either be pronounced or it could be left silent adding or removing an extra syllable. Chaucer precisely arranged these alterations while creating his poems and this helped him to maintain the rather rough metre of the romances (Cannon, 2004: 236).

3.1.2. John Skelton (c. 1460-1529)

John Skelton was an English poet and satirist, who was born in the 1460s and died June 21, 1529 in London. He is seen as one of the most important poets of the Tudor era. It is unknown where and when he was born but it is known that he studied at Cambridge and received a degree in rhetoric at Cambridge, Leuven and Oxford. He could read Greek and translated a number of Greek authors. The fact that he was good with languages and translated not only Greek, certainly helped him to become a court poet to Henry VII. In early 16th century Skelton became rector of Diss and he kept this position until he died. In 1512 he was granted the title of orator regius by Henry VIII and thanks to this Skelton became an adviser to the King on matters of poems, public and church issues (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2019).

It is hard to place Skelton and his poetry into a chronological perspective. His work shows no trace of Italian tradition which can already be found in the works of just somewhat younger writers. He can neither be placed as a medieval nor renaissance poet because he stands in the middle. He approached the forms and genres of his 15th century predecessors relatively freely. This approach of his only added to his works to be seen as decadent (Griffiths, 2006: 1-2).

His poetry has undergone an evolution throughout his life. Skelton was writing in the period after the common use of medieval language and at the beginning of the Renaissance in England. Doggerel, a freely composed and frequently irregular form of verse, can often be found in his rhymes. It was a very effective form, because it had a simple rhyme and striding metre. It is a verse form characteristic of nursery rhymes and children's games. Dogerrel was first found in use in Geoffrey Chaucer's poem "Tale of Sir Thopas". Skelton wrote a verse that has been considered for a long time to be nearly doggerel (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2020).

Later on, he invented his own poetic style. He used short verses written in an irregular metre. In a way this new type of verse form is related to the doggerel. Verses of this new verse form, which was later to be called Skeltonics, had short lines with two or three stresses that were organized either in a falling or in a rising rhythm. The rhyme of this form is of an irregular and frequently an expanded length (Griffith, 2006: 8). Skeltonics relied heavily on literary devices such as alliteration. Because Skelton wrote his poems as satirical, this form began to be seen as intentionally provocative (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2020).

3.1.3. Edmund Spenser (c. 1552-1599)

Edmund Spenser was an English poet, who was born in the early 1550s in London and died also in London January 13, 1599. He is best known for his long poem *The Faerie Queene*, which is considered to be one of the greatest poems ever written in English. He is known to have come from a wealthy family, but his immediate family was not all that rich. When studying at grammar school, where he learned Latin, Hebrew and Greek, he was a poor boy. His studies at Cambridge were crucial for his knowledge of foreign and also English literature of earlier

periods. He was able to compose his own original structures thanks to his knowledge of the traditional forms and topics of various types of poetry. Without certain earlier poems, he could never have written a poem so epic and heroic as *The Faerie Queene* (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2020).

As a poet, Spenser was a prominent representative of English romanticism. He is a central figure in both the romantic character in the Elizabethan Era and also in the Romantic Revival that followed. Conventional romantic themes and topics such as chivalry or a life dedicated to love can be found in Spenser's poems. Even though there could be found some medieval themes in Spenser's poems, he is not medieval but looks rather onward into the Renaissance (Stoll, 1967: 153-154). Spenser's contribution to poetry is the invention of Spenserian stanza. It is a verse form consisting of eight lines written in iambic pentameter that are followed by a ninth line of six iambic feet (also known as the alexandrine), the rhyme scheme of this form is ababbcbcc. Spenser invented this form for *The Faerie Queene* on the basis of Old French ballade that had a rhyme scheme ababbcbc, Italian ottava rima rhyming abababcc and also Chaucer's ababbcbc (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2020).

It may be interesting to note that Spenser used the feminine rhymes, where the stress is on the penultimate syllable, and he did so in order to attract female readers. His usage of feminine rhymes can be seen in *The Faerie Queene*, where he used it to manipulate the Queen into reading the poem. *The Faerie Queene* also ends with a feminine rhyme (Hurley, 2012: 48).

3.1.4. William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

William Shakespeare was an English poet and dramatist, who was baptized April 26, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon and died April 23, 1616 in Stratford as well. Shakespeare was also called "The Bard" and is considered as one of the greatest poets and dramatists of all time. Shakespeare wrote his plays to be performed at a small local theatre but unlike the majority of his contemporaries, they are still being played today all around the world. His father was chosen as a bailiff, which was a position that could correspond to mayor of the town. Shakespeare did not go to university, but he got married when he was 18 years old (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2020).

According to Michael Schoenfeldt, Shakespeare's sonnets function as a cultural mirror that shows how the cultures think about race, gender, class and the character of poetic creation. It is interesting to see that almost as much as is revealed in the sonnets, is also disguised in them. Experts throughout the years have wondered about the correct way of reading the sonnets. The question that they are dealing with is what is the most significant unit of meaning in the sonnets, it may be the word, the sentence, the quatrain, the poem, or the whole sequence of the sonnets. The sonnets form a crucial part to evolutions of some twentieth-century criticisms, for instance gay studies or feminism. (Schoenfeldt, 2007: 125)

The main form of Shakespeare's poetry is the sonnet. Sonnet originated in Sicily in the 13th century and has become an instantly distinguishable poetic form. The original verse structure of the sonnet has fourteen lines that rhyme abba abba cde cde. It can be divided into two parts – a rhyming octave and a rhyming sestet. The sestet can possibly be rhymed as cdc dcd or it can have any other combination of two or three intertwined rhymes. When the sonnet started being used in England at the beginning of the 16th century, the Italian hendecasyllabic metre (line composed of eleven syllables) had to be adapted to the English language. It was accustomed into the classical English iambic pentameter. The English form of the sonnet became known as the English sonnet. The English sonnet has seven rhymes with a couplet at the end (abab bcbc cdcd ee) (Hurley, 2012: 76-77). The Shakespearean sonnet is written in an iambic pentameter and consists of 14 lines that are composed of three quatrains (stanza made of 4 lines) and one rhyming couples (stanza made of 2 lines). The fact that it is written in an iambic pentameter means that there are ten syllables on each line and a stressed syllable follows an unstressed syllable. The most famous example of an iambic pentameter is from Shakespeare's Sonnet 18: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"

3.2. Method

To recognize a rhyme that has stopped rhyming because of the GVS, it was important to first define what exactly I was looking for. If there was a full rhyme in the present-day pronunciation of the poem in a place where I expected the words to rhyme, there was no need for me to further examine it as it has either not been affected by the GVS, or both parts of the

rhyme were affected in the same way. If there happened to be a partial rhyme or no rhyme, it required further examination. With these types of rhyme I had to decide whether the reason for their dysfunction was the GVS, a different phonological change or something else. I did the whole analysis in Microsoft Excel, where I created three columns. First I copied each of the individual poems and I pasted them into tophonetics.com. Tophonetics.com is a web page that transcribes the pasted text into IPA. Then I took the original text and the transcription and I pasted them into Excel. Then I created a third column, into which I pasted the transcription again but here I removed all the characters that could disrupt my analysis, for example full stops, exclamation points, question marks, colons, semi-colons etc. To help me decide which lines I had to examine, I used a formula in Excel. This formula is looking four lines back and four lines forward and it is taking into account the last three phonemes in the third column (the IPA transcription column without punctuation). If there would be more than two identical phonemes, then it would mark that there is a rhyme. It is examining precisely the last three characters of the lines because in the theory of verse it is believed that a functioning full rhyme has the final vowel stressed and all following sounds the same (Hurley, 2012: 47).

This were to be new made when thou art old,	ðɪs wɜ: tu: bi: nju: meɪd wɛn ðaʊ ɑ:t əʊld,								
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.	ænd si: ðaɪ blʌd wɔ:m wɛn ðaʊ feel'st ɪt kəʊld.								
ðɪs wɜ: tu: bi: nju: meɪd wɛn ðaʊ ɑ:t əʊld	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1
ænd si: ðaɪ blʌd wɔ:m wɛn ðaʊ feel'st ɪt kəʊld	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	1

Table 2: An example of a functioning rhyme from my analysis

Table 2 shows an example of a functioning rhyme from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 2" in my analysis. The formula can return two possible outcomes, according to the number of identical phonemes. It can be seen in Table 3 that the last three phonemes matched and therefore the formula returned number "1" (functioning rhyme). If the phonemes would not be identical, the formula would return number "0" (a rhyme I have to analyse). For clarity, the cell with the number is formated according to the returned number and either has a green colour (when "1"), or a red colour (when "0"). The example in Table 2 is an example that I skipped during my analysis, since it still rhymes in PDE, but it is a good example for demonstrating how the formula works. The first four numbers are referring to four previous lines and the last four numbers are referring to four following lines. The first number zero in the first line, for instance,

means that four lines above this line there are less than two identical phonemes at the end of the line. The number three on the first line refers one line down, where there is number three in the fourth column, referring one line up. That means that there are at least 4 identical phonemes in these two lines and therefore the formula classifies it as a rhyme.

Upon thy side, against myself I'll fight,	əˈpɒn ðaɪ saɪd, əˈgɛnst maɪˈsɛlf aɪl faɪt,	əˈpɒnðaɪsaɪdəˈgɛnstmaɪˈsɛlfaɪlfaɪt	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworn.	ænd pruːv ðiː ˈvɜːtjʊəs, ðəʊ ðaʊ ɑːt fɔːˈswɔːn.	ændpruːvðiːˈvɜːtjʊəsðəʊðaʊɑːtfɔːˈswɔːn	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
With mine own weakness being best acquainted,	wɪð maɪn əʊn ˈwiːknɪs ˈbiːɪŋ bɛst əˈkweɪntɪd,	wɪðmaɪnəʊnˈwiːknɪsˈbiːɪŋbɛstəˈkweɪntɪd	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1
Upon thy part I can set down a story	əˈpɒn ðaɪ pɑːt aɪ kæn sɛt daʊn ə ˈstɔːri	əˈpɒnðaɪpɑːtaɪkænsɛtdaʊnəˈstɔːri	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1
Of faults concealed, wherein I am attainted;	ɒv fɔːlts kənˈsiːld, weərˈɪn aɪ æm əˈteɪntɪd;	ɒvfɔːltskənˈsiːldweərˈɪnaɪæməˈteɪntɪd	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1
That thou in losing me shalt win much glory:	ðæt ðaʊ ɪn ˈluːzɪŋ miː ʃælt wɪn mʌtʃ ˈglɔːriː	ðætðaʊɪnˈluːzɪŋmiːʃæltwɪnmʌtʃˈglɔːri	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1
And I by this will be a gainer too;	ænd aɪ baɪ ðɪs wɪl biː ə ˈgeɪnə tuː;	ændaɪbaɪðɪswɪlbiːəˈgeɪnətuː	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
For bending all my loving thoughts on thee,	fɔː ˈbɛndɪŋ ɔːl maɪ ˈlʌvɪŋ θɔːts ɒn ðiː,	fɔːˈbɛndɪŋɔːlmaɪˈlʌvɪŋθɔːtsɒnðiː	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
The injuries that to myself I do,	ðiˈɪndʒəriz ðæt tuː maɪˈself aɪ duː,	ðiˈɪndʒərizðættuːmaɪˈselfaɪduː	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3: An example of how the formula works

To fully demonstrate how the whole formula works, I chose an example from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 88". The middle line "Of faults concealed, wherein I am attained" in Table 3 is the examined line. It can be seen that there is a number 3 in the third cell. That specific cell is refering two lines up and it means that the examined line and the line which lies two lines above this examined line share at least 4 identical characters at the end of the line. Since there are zeros in the rest of the cells, that means that this line does not share more than one identical phoneme in any of the surrounding lines. The formula decided that the examined line rhymes with another line and therefore it assigned it a green "1" (functioning rhyme).

But if thou live, remembered not to be,	bʌt ɪf ðaʊ lɪv, rɪˈmɛmbəd nɒt tuː biː,									
Die single and thine image dies with thee.	daɪ ˈsɪŋgl ænd ðaɪn ˈɪmɪdʒ daɪz wɪð ðiː									
bʌtɪfðaʊlɪvrɪˈmɛmbədnɒttuːbiː	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	
daɪˈsɪŋglændðaɪnˈɪmɪdʒdaɪzwɪððiː	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	

Table 4: An example of a rhyme from my analysis

There can also appear a rhyme that would not be recognized as a rhyme by the formula. This can be seen in Table 4 where there is an example from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 3". Even though the words *be/thee* do rhyme, the formula examined it as a non-functioning rhyme as the number of identical phonemes is lower than three. For this reason, I had to manually go through all of the lines with the red zero in the last column and eliminate such instances as in Table 4. The algorithm is rather cautious in marking rhymes because what it marks as a rhyme is eliminated from further analysis. It is therefore better when it identifies a rhyme as a non-rhyme because I can eliminate that during manual analysis than if it would identify a non-rhyme as a functioning rhyme. I encountered many different instances of the formula classifying the

rhymes as non-functioning. Probably the most common reason was that the spelling of the word has changed over time and as a result it has not been not recognized by tophonetics.com and therefore it has not been transcribed into IPA. If the rest of the final words was transcribed correctly, the formula may evaluate it as non-functioning because the non-transcribed word would end in different phonemes. This instance can be seen in Table 5, which is an example from "Faerie Queene" by Spenser. It can be seen that the word *breast* is spelled differently than in PDE and therefore tophonetics.com did not transcribe the word and the formula marked it as non-rhyme.

Did search, sore grieued in her gentle brest,	dɪd sɜːʧ, sɔː grieued ɪn hɜː ˈʤɛntl brest,								
He so vngently left her, whom she loued best.	hiː səʊ vngently lɛft hɜː, huːm ʃiː luːd bɛst.								
dɪdsɜːʧsɔːgrieuedɪnhɜːˈʤɛntlbrest	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
hiːsəʊvngentlylɛfthɜːhuːmʃiːluːdbɛst	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

Table 5: An example of another incorrectly marked rhyme

Among other examples that I encountered, which I had to manually eliminate, there was an abundance of rhymings of past participle endings -ed. As those can be pronounced differently in various phonetic environments, they also differ in transcription and for that reason were marked as non-functioning rhymes by the formula. This can be seen in Table 6 where the non-functioning rhyme appears in the first and the third line. These are examples that are irrelevant for my analysis as they did most likely rhyme at the time and have not been affected by the GVS.

She wore, with crownes and owches garnished,	ʃiː wɔː, wɪð kraʊnz ænd owches ˈgɑːnɪʃt,								
The which her lauish louers to her gaue;	ðə wɪʧ hɜː lauish ˈluːəz tuː hɜː gaue;								
Her wanton palfrey all was ouerspred	hɜː ˈwɒntən ˈpɔːlfri ɔːl wɒz ouerspred								
ʃiːwɔːwɪðkraʊnzændowchesˈgɑːnɪʃt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ðəwɪʧhɜːlauishˈluːəztuːhɜːgaue	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1
hɜːˈwɒntənˈpɔːlfriɔːlwɒzouerspred	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6: An example of a rhyme marked as non-functioning because of past participle

The last major instance of incorrectly marked non-functioning rhymes is the rhyming of the final /ɪ/ sounds. I have encountered these examples the most in "Faerie Queene" where Spenser created rhymes with the use of many adverbs. Good example of this is shown in Table 7 in lines 1, 3 and 4.

And all the while, most heauenly melody	ænd ɔːl ðə waɪl, məʊst heauenly ˈmɛlədi	ændɔːlðəwaɪlməʊstheauenlyˈmɛlədi	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0		0
About the bed sweet musicke did diuide,	əˈbaʊtðəbɛdswiːtmusickedɪddiuide	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0		0
Him to beguile of griefe and agony:	hɪm tuː bɪˈgaɪl ɒv griefe ænd ˈægəniː	hɪmtuːbɪˈgaɪlɒvgriefeændˈægəni	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0		0
And all the while Duessa wept full bitterly.	ænd ɔːl ðə waɪl Duessa wɛpt fʊl ˈbɪtəli	ændɔːlðəwaɪlDuessawɛptfʊlˈbɪtəli	0	0	0	0		0	0	0	0		0

Table 7: Rhyme marked as non-functioning because of the rhyming of final /ɪ/ sound

All of the previous examples had to be manually marked as irrelevant for my analysis. What I was left with were the rhymes marked as non-functioning as a consequence of some kind of sound shift. The next step was to decide whether the sound change was the GVS or something else. If the rhyme does not work in PDE but not as a result of the GVS, I again marked it as irrelevant for the purpose of this thesis. After I identified an instance of a rhyme being non-functioning because of the GVS, I marked it as a good example. Then I made a note next to it with the specific vowel shift that happened to the vowel. It is also worth mentioning that the examples that I found can be a result of more changes, including the GVS. Among these changes could be for instance shortening and then subsequent the GVS. In some examples it could have happened that both of the words have undergone the GVS but one of them changed afterwards. These instances I did not analyse.

O! what excuse will my poor beast then find,	**əʊ! wɒt ɪksˈkjuːs wɪl maɪ pʊə biːst ðɛn faɪnd,**														
When swift extremity can seem but slow?	wɛn swɪft ɪksˈtrɛmɪti kæn siːm bʌt sləʊ?														
Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind,	**ðɛn ʃʊd aɪ spɜː, ðəʊ ˈmaʊntɪd ɒn ðə wɪnd,**														
əʊ wɒt ɪksˈkjuːs wɪl maɪ pʊə biːst ðɛn faɪnd	0	0	0	0		0	2	0	0	1	ano	iː → aɪ
wɛn swɪft ɪksˈtrɛmɪti kæn siːm bʌt sləʊ	0	0	0	0		0	1	0	0	0		
ðɛn ʃʊd aɪ spɜː ðəʊ ˈmaʊntɪd ɒn ðə wɪnd	0	0	2	0		0	0	0	0	1	ano	

Table 8: An example of the GVS in my analysis

In Table 8, which is an example from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 51", it is demonstrated how I marked my good examples. To be easier for me to find, I changed the background colour to black and the font colour to white. In the column next to the analysis, I put "iː → aɪ" which is the shift that this particular rhyme has undergone. To get a relevant sample, I analysed over a thousand lines by each of the poets. To know precisely how many lines I have analysed, I put a function to each of the pages in the Excel. The function basically looks at all the lines and if there is any text in the line, the filter writes "1". If the line is empty, the filter writes "0". Then I looked at the number of the last line where I did any analysing and I went back to the first line in the column with the function and in there I put the span of lines I analysed, e.g. in my Chaucer page I put =SUMA(A2:A1663) which means that I analysed all the lines between line 2 and

line 1663. The function returned the number of lines with text, which subsequently showed me that I analysed 1654 lines of *The Canterbury Tales*.

As the rhyme analysing formula evaluates the rhymes four lines above and four lines below I had to divide the poems or the stanzas with four empty lines. If I have not done that, the formula would be looking over the boundaries of the separate poems (in the case of Shakespeare and Skelton) or over the boundaries of the individual stanzas (in the case of Spenser) and it could report that the last line of the previous stanza rhymes with the first line of the following stanza, which is usually not how the poets intended the rhyme schemes to work. "The General Prologue" and "The Knight's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales* are written in rhyming couplets, therefore I made no divisions there.

3.2.1. The Possible Scenarios of the Development

After finishing my analysis, I discovered that there are certain typical scenarios in the sound development of the words that I detected as non-rhymes. The basic assumption is that since both words used to rhyme in ME, the vowels in question were identical and their phonological development (in this case through GVS) should be the same. However, because they no longer rhyme in PDE, one or both of the words had to deviate from this basic scenario. First such scenario is where one of the words has undergone a change that disqualified it from the GVS – for instance a vowel shortening. This can be seen in *held* in Example 32 below.

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled,
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,

Example 32

Second possible scenario is that one of the words in the rhyme has changed after undergoing the GVS, as can be seen in Example 25, where the word *wind* has been affected by the GVS but has subsequently shortened.

O! what excuse will my poor beast then find,
Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind,

Example 25

Third scenario which was actually very common was that one of the words was of French or Latin origin and therefore it has undergone a stress shift or a stress loss. Because of the stress shift the newly unstressed vowel gets shortened and disqualified from the GVS as shown in Example 1. This is a special case of my first mentioned scenario.

Curteis he was, lowely and servysáble,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

Example 1

Fourth scenario that I also encountered is a case where none of the words has actually undergone the GVS but in reality the PDE diphthong that appears in the word is not a result of the GVS but rather a result of a development of ME -*we*. The vowel *o* developed earlier than the following *w* consonant, the consonant then vocalized to /u/ and this process resulted in the /oʊ/ diphthong (Dobson, 1957: 866). Example of this can be seen below in Example 38. Because these cases are not concerned with the GVS, I excluded them.

And if he foond owher a good felawe,
He wolde techen him to have noon awe,

Example 38

4. Empirical Part

As mentioned above, for the empirical part of this thesis I analysed poetry by four English poets who lived and created poetry at different stages of the GVS. The goal of this thesis is to exemplify the effects of the GVS in terms of how often it can be found in the poems and whether there is a specific vowel shift that would appear more often earlier or later than the rest of them or whether all of the shifts are represented equally. Based on the examples this thesis will try to demonstrate the chronology of the GVS. The analysis will be looking at the answers to these questions generally and also more specifically poet by poet.

4.1. Quantitative Overview of the Data

After analysing 6825 lines of poetry and finding 83 examples, I created another page in my Excel document where I copied and pasted all of my good examples. Firstly, I divided them into four groups, depending on the poet in whose poems I have found them. Secondly, I went through all of the examples and colour coded them based on the specific vowel change. After that I divided all of them into six groups according to the six long stressed ME vowels affected by the GVS. Before the GVS there were actually 7 vowels but as the original /eː/ and /ɛː/ merged into the same /iː/ sound I counted both of these shifts into the same group. Then I counted the number of instanes of each individual shift. To see the number of examples I had for each change, I created a separate table where I wrote the particular numbers, see Table 9 below.

aː → eɪ	11
iː → aɪ	38
uː → aʊ	6
eː → iː	12
oː → uː	0
ɔː → əʊ	16
=	83

Table 9: Specific numbers of my examples

What I tried to achieve was to find as many examples of the GVS as possible so that I would be able to compare the amount of the examples found in the work of each poet and thus in the different periods of the GVS. To get a relevant sample I wanted to analyse at least a

thousand lines per each poet. In Table 10, there are the exact numbers of the analysed lines, the instances found within the works of the poets, and the percentage the shifts occupy. I calculated the percentage by dividing the number of found instances by the number of analysed lines. Then I multiplied the result by a hundred to get the ratio. Note that the relative values here are not directly comparable to the token based relative frequency common in corpus linguistics, since it is not based on token per token total count, but rather in token per total line count.

	Lines analysed	GVS instances	Percentage
Geoffrey Chaucer	1654	20	1,21 %
John Skelton	1985	13	0,65 %
Edmund Spenser	1968	24	1,22 %
William Shakespeare	1218	26	2,13 %

Table 10: Number of analysed lines, number of instances of the GVS and their percentage in the works of the individual poets

In Table 11 below it is shown how often each of the vowel changes appeared in the works of each individual poet. The most frequent change that I found in the poems was the shift from /iː/ to /aɪ/ which was found 38 times. It was not only the most frequent change overall, but it was also the most frequent one in the works of each of the poets. As Table 11 shows, this shift dominates in Spencer's poetry the most. On the other hand, the least frequent change which I have not managed to find at all in the whole analysis was the change from /oː/ to /uː/.

	aː → eɪ	iː → aɪ	uː → aʊ	eː → iː	oː → uː	ɔː → əʊ
Chaucer	3	8	3	3	0	3
Skelton	1	7	0	1	0	4
Spenser	3	14	3	3	0	1
Shakespeare	4	9	0	5	0	8

Table 11: Distribution of the individual shifts

	aː → eɪ	iː → aɪ	uː → aʊ	eː → iː	oː → uː	ɔː → əʊ
Chaucer	15 %	40 %	15 %	15 %	0 %	15%
Skelton	7,7 %	53,8 %	0 %	7,7 %	0 %	30,8 %
Spenser	12,5 %	58,3 %	12,5 %	12,5 %	0 %	4,2 %
Shakespeare	15,4 %	34,6 %	0 %	19,2 %	0 %	30,8 %

Table 12: Percentage of the individual shifts in the works of each poet

	aː → eɪ	iː → aɪ	uː → aʊ	eː → iː	oː → uː	ɔː → əʊ
Chaucer	27,3 %	21,1 %	50 %	25 %	0 %	18,75 %
Skelton	9,1 %	18,4 %	0 %	8,3 %	0 %	25 %
Spenser	27,3 %	36,9 %	50 %	25 %	0 %	6,25 %
Shakespeare	36,4 %	23,7 %	0 %	66,7 %	0 %	50 %

Table 13: Percentage of the individual shifts based chronologically

4.2. Individual Vowel Shifts

4.2.1. Shift from /aː/ to /eɪ/

The original ME vowel /aː/ went through a number of shifts before reaching the PDE pronunciation. According to Brinton and Arnovick, it first shifted to /æ/ by 16th century, to /ɛː/ by 17th century, and then by 18th century to /eː/. It was in Modern English when the vowel /eː/ got diphthongized to /eɪ/ which preserved to PDE (Brinton and Arnovick, 2011: 330-331). It can be seen in Table 11 that this shift appears in poetry by all authors, but it is not as frequent as some of the other changes. It is the 3rd least frequent of the vowel changes.

In Chaucer this shift appears three times. In Example 1 below it can be seen that the word *table* has undergone the GVS. At the time of the poem's creation the word was most likely pronounced as /taːble/ and the word *servysáble* was most likely pronounced as /sɛːvɪsaːble/. Today's pronunciation of the words is /teɪbl/ for *table* and /sɛːvɪsəbl/ for *servysáble*. The word *servysáble* has undergone a shift in pronunciation as well but it was a different shift than the GVS. These different types of shifts commonly include shortening, or the stress shift/stress loss. As the word *servysáble* is a French loanword what happened here was that the affected vowel was placed outside the stem and originally was probably stressed. After a stress shift in or to

the stem the newly unstressed vowel got shortened and then did not undergo the GVS. In Example 2 it is the word *estat* that has undergone the GVS. In this example both of the final words have undergone a change in spelling as they are spelled as *obstinate* and *estate* in PDE. The word *estat* was most likely pronounced as /estaːt/ at the time and in PDE it is pronounced as /ɪsteɪt/ and the word *obstinate* was most likely pronounced as /ɔbstinaːt/ and it is pronounced as /ɔbstɪnət/ in PDE as it has most likely undergone a different vowel change than the GVS, this change possibly being shortening. In Example 3 it was the word *y-shave* that has undergone the GVS. Originally, it was probably pronounced as /ʃaːve/ and in PDE it is pronounced as /ʃeɪv/. The word *have* is still spelled the same in PDE, but it has most likely changed in pronunciation as well. If it rhymed in Chaucer's time, it would probably have to be pronounced as /haːve/ and in PDE it is pronounced as /hæv/. One of the possible explanations could be that the word *have* was also undergoing the GVS but it has not followed it until the end when it got diphthongized. Another potential explanation could be that *have* has undergone shortening typical of grammatical words.

Curteis he was, lowely and servysáble,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

Example 1

But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,

Example 2

No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;

Example 3

In Skelton's poetry I found this specific shift only once. In Example 4 below it can be seen that the word that has undergone the GVS is the word *cam* which is also spelled as *came* in PDE. In Skelton's time it was probably pronounced as /kaːm/, while in PDE it is pronounced as /keɪm/. The word *Norham* has most likely undergone a shift as well because it was probably pronounced as /nɔrhaːm/ and it is pronounced as /nɔːrəm/ in PDE. What could have happened here would then be again shortening.

For to the castell of Norham
I understonde to soone ye cam,

Example 4

In *Faerie Queene* by Spenser, I found this shift three times. In Example 5 below it can be seen that the word *lambe* is spelled differently in PDE (*lamb*) and the word *came* is still spelled the same, but the pronunciation has changed because of the GVS. It was most likely pronounced as /ka:m/ but in PDE it is pronounced as /keɪm/. It is interesting to see that while in Example 4 above the word is spelled without the final "e", the letter appears in spelling in Example 5. The word *lambe*, on the other hand, loses the final "e" in spelling in PDE. It has also undergone a vowel change as it was possibly originally pronounced as /la:m/ and it is pronounced as /læm/ in PDE. The word might have possibly been following the GVS but only partially just like the word *have* in Example 3 above. As mentioned before, this specific vowel change from /a:/ to /eɪ/ has gone through multiple stages of the shift, one of the stages being the /æ/ sound in 1500s. It might be that the word has been shifting until this time and then it stopped. Another possible explanation could be that the word *lambe* has been affected by shortening. In Examples 6 and 7, Spenser used the word *hast* which is now spelled as *haste* and it has undergone the GVS. The other final words in those two examples – *repast* and *last* have probably not undergone any vowel shift as they are still pronounced with /a:/ in PDE. The word *hast*, however, shifted in pronunciation. It was probably pronounced as /ha:st/ in Spenser's time and it is pronounced as /heɪst/ in PDE.

So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,
And by descent from Royall lynage came

Example 5

Forthwith he runnes with feigned faithfull hast
And dreames, gan now to take more sound repast,

Example 6

He liues, that shall him pay his dewties last,
And guiltie Elfin bloud shall sacrifice in hast.

Example 7

Lastly, in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* I found this shift 4 times. In Examples 8 and 10 below, the words that have undergone the GVS are the words *waste* and *taste*. Those were presumably pronounced as /waːst/ and /taːst/ in Shakespeare's time while they are pronounced as /weɪst/ and /teɪst/ in PDE. In Example 9 it was the word *grave* that has been affected by the GVS. It was most likely originally pronounced as /graːv/ and it is pronounced as /greɪv/ in PDE. In Example 11 it is the word *haste* which has undergone the GVS. This word has already appeared in Spenser's poetry, as I mentioned above but it can be seen that while in Spenser the word was spelled without the final "e", in Shakespeare the final "e" is written. The word *past* in Examples 8 and 10 has appeared in homophone lists paired with the word *paste* so it is possible that the word has undergone vowel shortening and then subsequent lengthening (Dobson, 1957: 468).

I summon up remembrance of things past,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:

Example 8

Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
The earth can yield me but a common grave,

Example 9

If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
But in the onset come: so shall I taste

Example 10

Not wondering at the present nor the past,
Made more or less by thy continual haste.

Example 11

4.2.2. Shift from /iː/ to /aɪ/

The high vowel /iː/ has been diphthongised. During the 15th century, the vowel was preceded by a schwa glide, which produced a rising diphthong /ə͡ɪ/. In the 16th century this became a falling diphthong /ə͡ɪ/. Then in many dialects the onset of the falling diphthong lowered to a low central vowel /a/ thus becoming /aɪ/ (Brinton and Arnovick, 2011: 329). This particular shift appeared the most frequently in my analysis. I encountered it 38 times, which is almost half of all of my examples.

In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* I found this shift 8 times. Below, I have chosen 4 examples of particular interest and as the rest of the examples is analogous, they can be found in the appendix. In Examples 12 and 15, it is interesting to see that the word *cry* has two different spellings. This might be due to the lack of standardization in the period when the same word could be found in more forms in one text. Chaucer could be influenced by the final words in the preceding line and when following *philosophie* writing the word with "i" and with "y" when following *envye*. The word was probably pronounced as /kriː/ before the GVS and as /kraɪ/ in PDE. Both *philosophie* and *envye* are of French origin so what might have happened there was stress shift and possible subsequent shortening. Example 13 was really interesting to analyse as the word that seems to have undergone the GVS is the word *I*. That would mean that it was possibly pronounced as /iː/ and after the GVS it is pronounced as /aɪ/. According to Dobson, homophone lists placed ME words *eye, I* and *aye* (meaning *yes)* under the vowel /iː/ (Dobson, 1957: 782). In Example 14 it was the word *lye* that has been affected by the GVS. In Chaucer's time it could have been pronounced as /liː/ while in PDE it is pronounced as /laɪ/. The spelling of the word is *lie* in PDE. The fact that in this example both of the final words end in "ye" further supports my theory that Chaucer may be modifying the graphic form according to the word with which he was currently rhyming.

Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;
Ay "Questio quid juris" wolde he crie.

Example 12

Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,

Example 13

For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye

Example 14

Quod theseus. Have ye so greet envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?

Example 15

In Skelton's poetry I came across this particular shift 7 times. In Example 16 below there are three lines that are supposed to all rhyme according to the rhyming scheme of the poem. However, in PDE *flye* and *ly* rhyme only with each other but not with *famuly*. The words *flye* and *ly* have undergone the GVS, unlike *famuly*, which has only changed the way it is spelled. Again, here in Example 16 is a different spelling of the word *ly* than could be seen in Example 14 above. The words *flye* and *ly* have most likely been pronounced as /fliː/ and /liː/ while in PDE they are pronounced as /flaɪ/ and /laɪ/. Both the words have also a different spelling in PDE – *fly* and *lie*. In Example 17 it is the word *Christ* which has undergone the GVS. For it to rhyme with *preest* (*priest* in PDE), it was most likely pronounced as /kriːst/ as opposed to PDE pronunciation /kraɪst/. The word *priest* was, according to Dobson, initially pronounced with tense /eː/ which was by 1500s raised to /iː/ pronunciation. This might mean that the word *priest* might have also undergone the GVS (Dobson, 1957: 652). What might have happened is that the word *priest* could have shifted when /iː/ shifted and therefore it rhymes with an archaic pronunciation of *Christ,* or it is a dialectal form. Example 18 was quite unusual as in the PDE spelling of both of the final words, the vowel "y" changed into "i" but only one of the words changed in pronunciation because of the GVS. This word is *dykes* which was possibly pronounced as /dɪːks/ and it is pronounced as /daɪks/ in PDE. The word *polytykes* is partly French and partly Latin borrowing which has most likely undergone stress shift and then shortening.

Together with servauntes of his famuly,
Of whos /life/ they counted not a flye;
Take up whose wold, for ther they let him ly.

Example 16

And lewdely sayes by Christ
Agaynst the sely preest.

Example 17

Lepe ouer lakes and dykes,
Set nothyng by polytykes ;

Example 18

Spenser's poetry was filled with this vowel change the most and I was able to find this change 14 times, that is over 4 times more than any other vowel change I encountered in Spenser. In the three chosen examples below, all four lines are supposed to rhyme according to the rhyming pattern of the poem. It is interesting that in each of the examples different lines are not rhyming anymore. In Example 19 the third and fourth line do not rhyme but it is only the final word in the third line which has undergone the GVS. The word *weare* in the fourth line has been affected by a different vowel change. This change might have been influenced by the *r* following the vowel (Dobson, 1957: 731). In Example 21, it is the fourth line which does not rhyme with the rest of the rhyme because of the GVS. In both above mentioned examples the shifted word is *inquere*. It has changed in pronunciation as well as in spelling (*inquire* in PDE). Originally this word was probably pronounced as /ɪnkwiːr/ and it is pronounced as /ɪnkwaɪər/ in PDE. In Example 20 the lines are supposed to rhyme aaaa but rhyme abab which suggests that two of the lines have undergone the GVS. These two lines are the second and the fourth line, ending in *spy* and *ny*, respectively. This was actually very common during my analysis that the rhyme worked only because the poet was rhyming many adverbs ending in "-ly" and other words ending with the /ɪ/ sound. What is different in this specific example is the fact that some of the sounds that presumably ended with /ɪː/ have shifted. The word *spy* was possibly pronounced as /spiː/ while in PDE it is pronounced as /spaɪ/. The word *ny* could have been pronounced as /niː/ and it is pronounced as /naɪ/ in PDE.

And homebred euill ye desire to heare,
That wasteth all this countrey farre and neare.
Of such (said he) I chiefly do inquere,
In which that wicked wight his dayes doth weare:

Example 19

A ramping Lyon rushed suddainly,
Soone as the royall virgin he did spy,
With gaping mouth at her ran greedily,
But to the pray when as he drew more ny,

Example 20

And cry, and curse, and raile, and rend her heare,
That causd her shed so many a bitter teare,
And so forth told the story of her feare:
And after for that Ladie did inquere;

Example 21

In Shakespeare's poetry I encountered this shift 9 times. In Example 22 there is the word *die*, which has undergone the GVS. It was probably pronounced as /diː/ in Shakespeare's time and in PDE it is pronounced /daɪ/. It is interesting as this could be another instance of the poet-favourite practice of rhyming the final /ɪː/ sounds. Examples 23 and 24 are very unusual as they both rhyme the word *eye*. The second word in both of these rhymes still ends in an /iː/ sound in PDE. If the word *eye* has undergone the GVS, it would mean that it has most likely been pronounced as /iː/ before the GVS and in PDE it is pronounced as /aɪ/. There are actually two possible explanation according to Dobson – the word might have been pronounced with a diphthong all along or there was the vowel /iː/ which he supports by evidence from the ME /iː/ homophone list where the word *eyes* can be found (Dobson, 1957: 782). Shakespeare actually used the word *eye*/*eyes* with other words ending in an /iː/ sound more often. Another example can be found in the appendix. The words *majesty* in Example 23 and *memory* in Example 22 are French loanwords. In the word *majesty* the /iː/ vowel was a common variant. In the word

memory assimilation to the native forms happened along with a stress shift (Dobson, 1957: 842). As all of these words rhyme with *eye* it is possible that they could all rhyme with /iː/ or even /iːe/ - this could be the case for the words *eye/eyes* as well as for the French loans. The word *alchemy* in Example 24 is most likely a case of rhyming final /ɪ/ sounds. In Example 25 both final words have actually undergone the GVS but only one of the words (in this case *wind*) was subsequently shortened. The word *find* was possibly pronounced as /fiːnd/ before the GVS and in PDE it is pronounced as /faɪnd/.

That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
His tender heir might bear his memory:

Example 22

Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
Serving with looks his sacred majesty;

Example 23

Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;

Example 24

O! what excuse will my poor beast then find,
Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind,

Example 25

4.2.3. Shift from /uː/ to /aʊ/

The vowel /uː/ is yet another high vowel. Like the vowel /aː/ it has undergone a similar shifting process. In the fifteenth century a schwa glide developed before the vowel which resulted in a rising diphthong /ə͡ʊ/. In the sixteenth century this became a falling diphthong [ə͡ʊ/. In the majority of dialects, the beginning of the diphthong was even further lowered to a low central vowel /a/ (Brinton and Arnovick, 2011: 329). In the analysis this was the second least encountered vowel shift which I only found 6 times in total.

In Chaucer's poetry I found this change 3 times. In Example 26 below there is an interesting example. Both of the words have probably shifted in pronunciation but only the word *hous* has undergone the GVS. It was probably pronounced as /huːs/ in Chaucer's time and in PDE it is pronounced as /haʊs/. In PDE there is also a silent "e" in spelling at the end of the word. The word *curious* must have undergone a different vowel change, possibly laxing, because in today's pronunciation it is pronounced with a schwa as /kjʊərɪəs/. I found the same rhyme as in Example 27 twice in the first thousand lines of *The Canterbury Tales*. The word which has undergone the GVS is the word *aboute* which is also spelled differently in PDE. Here there is a final "e" in spelling which is not pronounced and in PDE the "e" has been omitted. The word *route* is still spelled the same as in Example 27 and it is also most likely still pronounced the same or very similarly. In American pronunciation, however, the word is pronounced as /raʊt/ and therefore it still rhymes today. The word *aboute* was probably originally pronounced as /əbuːt/ and in PDE it is pronounced as /əbaʊt/.

That weren of lawe expert and curious,
Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous

Example 26

Tukked he was as is a frere, aboute.
And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

Example 27

The only poet other than Chaucer in whose poetry I found this shift was Spenser. I also encountered this shift in his work 3 times. In all three examples Spenser rhymed the word *wound* with different words. In Example 28 below it can be seen that he rhymed the word *wound* with *arownd* (PDE *around*). In the other two examples, which can be found in the appendix, the word *wound* was rhyming with *ground*, *round*, *found*. All these words have undergone the GVS unlike the word *wound* which has actually failed to diphthongize because of the preceding *w* consonant. This failure is further strengthened by the fact that the vowel is followed by another consonant (Dobson, 1957: 686). The word *arownd* from Example 28 was possibly pronounced as /əruːnd/ while it is pronounced as /əraʊnd/ in PDE. The words *ground*, *round*, *found* have undergone the same development as the word *arownd*. They were originally most likely

pronounced as /gruːnd/, /ruːnd/, /fuːnd/ and in PDE are pronounced as /graʊnd/, /raʊnd/, /faʊnd/. It is interesting that if all these words rhymed in Spenser's time that only one of those 5 words has not undergone the GVS and did not change its pronunciation.

Tho wrapping vp her wrethed sterne arownd,
All suddenly about his body wound,

Example 28

4.2.4. Shift from /eː/ to /iː/

According to Brinton and Arnovick, this specific shift happened very early in the ME period. It could be the first long vowel that shifted (Brinton and Arnovick, 2011: 331). There have actually been two different /eː/ sounds in ME – /eː/ and /ɛː/, which have both merged and shifted to /iː/. For clarity I took both of these changes as one shift instead of two separate ones. The shift from /ɛː/ to /iː/ has been more complicated than the shift from /eː/ to /iː/. The ME /ɛː/ shifted during the sixteenth century to /eː/ and it stayed there for a while. Words with /ɛː/ and words with ME /ɑː/ have both shifted to /eː/. The words can rhyme after they become the same phoneme. There also seems to have been an alternative pronunciation of /ɛː/ which was /iː/. In the middle of the 18th century the /iː/ pronunciation became the standard in almost all words. The shift from /ɛː/ to /iː/ resulted in a number of homophones as the original /eː/ had previously also shifted to /iː/. These homophones include pairs such as: *meed/mead*; *heel/heal*; *see/sea*. There is a number of such words which have a spelling that can indicate which of the vowels was the original one – "ee" spelling could have originally been /eː/ and "ea" spelling could have been initially /ɛː/ (Brinton and Arnovick, 2011: 331-332). This however does not apply in all cases. In my analysis I found this shift 12 times.

In Chaucer, this shift appeared 3 times. In Example 29 below there is the word *geere* which has undergone the GVS. This example was quite challenging as the original pronunciation rhyming with /wɛːr/ was most likely /gɛːr/ and in today's pronunciation it is /gɪə/. In PDE there is a diphthong because of the omission of the final /r/. The spelling of *geere* also changed and in PDE it is spelled as *gear*, which is the spelling often used for the original /ɛː/ sound, as mentioned above.

Wo was his cook but if his sauce were
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.

Example 29

This shift appeared only once in Skelton's poetry. In Example 30 both final words are spelled differently in PDE – *read* and *dread*, which could once again suggest that the original vowel was /ɛː/ and not /eː/. Only the word *rede* has undergone the GVS. Before the shift it was most likely pronounced as /rɛːd/ while in PDE it is pronounced as /riːd/ in present simple tense. The word *dread* has only undergone shortening, which was common in ME monosyllables preceding a single final consonant (Dobson, 1957: 502).

Some can not scarsly rede,
And yet he wyll not drede

Example 30

In the analysis of Spenser's poetry this shift appeared 3 times. In Example 31 all four lines were supposed to rhyme but actually only two of them do. The words *heat* and *beat* have undergone the GVS. Originally, they were most likely pronounced as /hɛːt/, /bɛːt/ and in PDE they are pronounced as /hiːt/, /biːt/. The word *great* is an example of an exceptional pronunciation of a diphthong /eɪ/. According to Brinton and Arnovick this unusual pronunciation could be found in some word in the mid-18th century when the [e] got diphthongized to [eɪ] for most speakers. Other exceptions include words such as "steak" (Brinton and Arnovick, 2011: 331). The word *threat* has undergone shortening because of the same reason as the word *dread* in Example 30 above.

And heaped blowes like yron hammers great:
The knight was fiers, and full of youthly heat:
And doubled strokes, like dreaded thunders threat:
Both stricken strike, and beaten both do beat,

Example 31

In Shakespeare's poems I found this shift 5 times. In Example 32 below the word that has undergone the GVS was the word *steeled*. Here the "ee" spelling signifies that the original vowel was possibly /eː/. It has most likely been pronounced as /steːld/ and after the GVS it is

pronounced as /stiːld/ in PDE. The word *held* has not been affected by the GVS and it has undergone shortening (Dobson, 1957: 478).

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled,
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,

Example 32

4.2.5. Shift from /oː/ to /uː/

This particular shift happened during the 16th century. In some words, the /uː/ was subsequently affected. It has laxed to /ʊ/ in words like *foot*, *book* and then further centralized to /ə/ʌ/ in some words such as *flood*, *blood*. The tense /uː/ stayed present in words with labials, for example *boom*. It is unknown when exactly the laxing of /uː/ occurred but, according to Brinton and Arnovick, Shakespeare rhymed words like *food*, *good*, *flood* (Brinton and Arnovick, 2011: 330). However, I did not encounter this shift at all during my analysis.

4.2.6. Shift from /ɔː/ to /əʊ/

This shift consisted of two smaller shifts. The first part took place in the 16th century and it was the shift from /ɔː/ to /oː/. The second part occurred in EModE and it was that /oː/ has diphthongized for the majority of speakers to /oʊ/ (Brinton and Arnovick, 2011: 330). This shift has appeared 16 times in my analysis and it is the second most frequent shift.

In Chaucer's poetry I encountered it 3 times. In Example 33 it is the word *post* that has undergone the GVS. Originally it was most likely pronounced as /pɔːst/ but in PDE it is pronounced as /poʊst/. The word *cost* has undergone shortening.

Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.

Example 33

In Skelton's poetry this shift appeared 4 times. In Example 34 there is a very popular combination of rhyming words. The pair *gone/alone* appears more often not only in the poetry of Skelton but also of that of Shakespeare. The word that has undergone the GVS is the word *alone* which was previously probably pronounced as /əlɔːn/ and in PDE it is pronounced as /ələʊn/. The word *gone* is also not pronounced as /gɔːn/ like it possibly was in Skelton's time,

but it is pronounced as /gɒn/ in PDE as a result of shortening (Dobson, 1957: 505). In Example 35 all three lines were supposed to rhyme but only two of them do. The words that rhyme in PDE – *Gost* and *bost* – have been affected by the GVS unlike the word *cost* which is today pronounced as /kɒst/. The words *Gost* and *bost* were most likely pronounced as /gɔːst/ and /bɔːst/ in Skelton's time and are pronounced as /gəʊst/ and /bəʊst/ in PDE.

Thy lust and liking is from thee gone;
Behold thou liest, luggard, alone!

Example 34

The grace of the Holy Gost :
Thus they make theyr bost
Through owte euery cost,

Example 35

In Spenser's poetry there was only one example of this shift. In Example 36 below all three lines have probably rhymed yet in PDE pronunciation only two of them do. The words that rhyme today – *owne* and *vnknowne* have both undergone the GVS. Both those words are also spelled differently in PDE – both words have lost their final "e" and the word *vnknowne* is also spelled with the initial "u" and not "v" anymore. For a period of time these two letters were interchangeable in a variety of phonetic environments. These two words were probably pronounced as /ɔːn/ and /ʌnnɔːn/ before the GVS and today they are pronounced as /əʊn/ and /ʌnnəun/. The word *none* has undergone shortening.

Yet chylde ne kinsman liuing had he none
To get, and nightly feare to lose his owne,
He led a wretched life vnto him selfe vnknowne.

Example 36

In Shakespeare's *Sonnets* I encountered this shift 8 times. However, majority of the examples includes pairs consisting of words *gone*, *alone* and *moan*. In Example 37 below, the word affected by the GVS is the word *most* which was possibly pronounced as /mɔːst/ and it is pronounced as /məʊst/ in PDE. The word *lost* has once again a short monophthong /ɒ/ which might mean that it has undergone shortening. There have actually been two variants of the

pronunciation of *lost* – one with a short vowel and one with a long vowel, both simultaneously in use for some time (Dobson, 1957: 528).

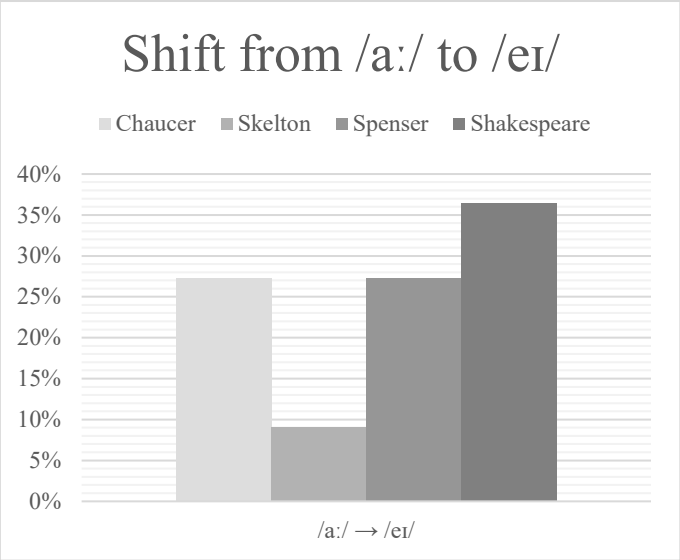
When I break twenty? I am perjured most;
And all my honest faith in thee is lost:

Example 37

5. Discussion

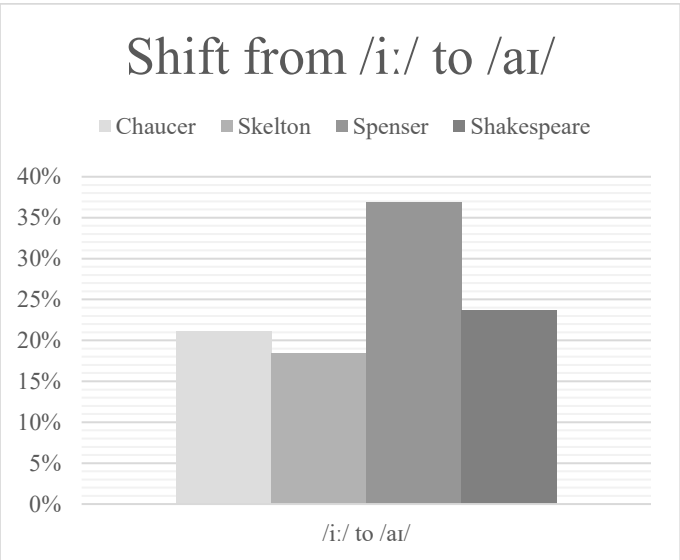
Some of the findings of this thesis have been surprising. In 6825 lines of poetry which have been analysed there have been found less examples than was expected at the beginning of writing this thesis. When dividing the number of analysed lines by the number of identified examples the result is that one example has been found in approximately every 82 lines. However, the specific numbers of each vowel shift are entirely different. On one hand there is the shift from /iː/ to /aɪ/ which has been found 38 times and on the other hand there is the shift from /oː/ to /uː/ which has not been encountered at all. It is, however, important to note that to get more conclusive results it would be necessary to count how many lines include the particular vowel. For example, if the majority of the poem is being rhymed on one vowel, it is not surprising that greater variety of the other shifts has not been encountered.

The shift from /aː/ to /eɪ/ has been found in the analysis a total of 11 times which is around 13 % of all the examples. It is the third least encountered shift in general. In the Graph 2 below it seems like the shift has been used very often at the beginning of the GVS but prior to Skelton it dropped by half before slowly becoming more frequent again. The Graph also shows that this shift could be encountered in Shakespeare's time more often than before.



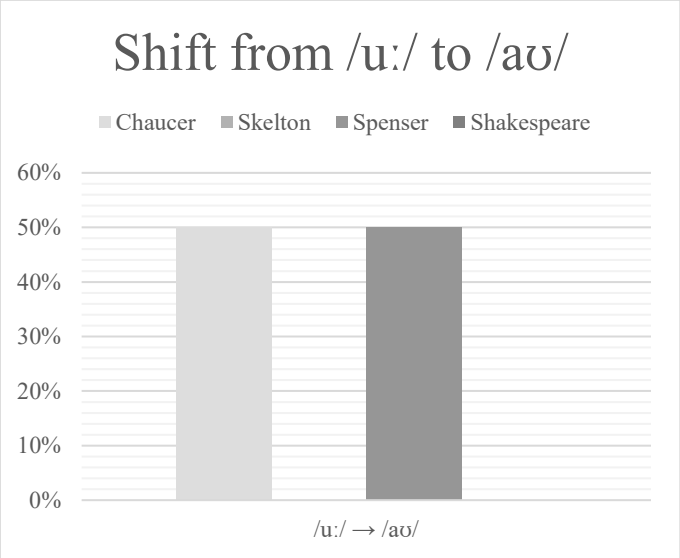
Graph 2: The percentual distribution of the shift from /aː/ to /eɪ/ in the works of the poets

The fact that the shift from /iː/ to /aɪ/ has appeared more than twice as often as any other shift and makes up more than 45 % of all the encountered shifts is an interesting find. It has not only been encountered the most overall, but it was also the most common shift within the works of each poet. This fact might mean two things: either it has been the most productive vowel shift, or it has been found the most because the words affected were used more often than words with a different vowel. In the Graph 3 below it can be seen that this change has been found more often in Chaucer than in Skelton who chronologically followed Chaucer but then it doubled in possible usage in Spenser's poem from 18,4 % to 36,9 % before dropping again during Shakespeare's time.



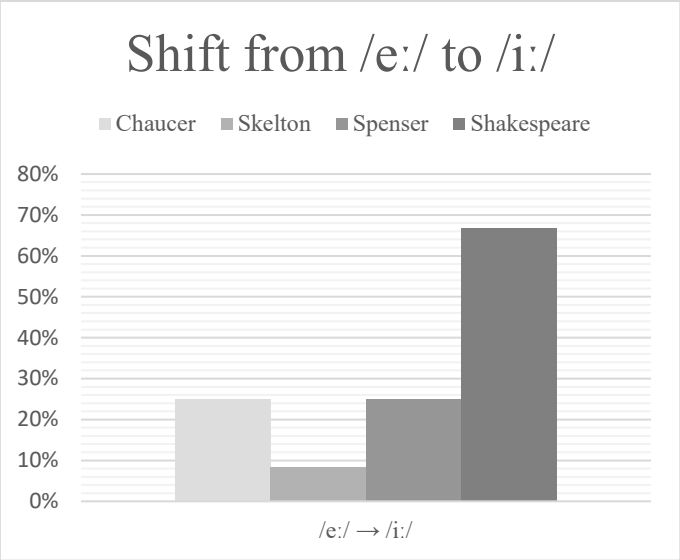
Graph 3: The percentual distribution of the shift from /iː/ to /aɪ/ in the works of the poets

The second least frequent shift was the shift from /uː/ to /aʊ/. In the Graph 4 below it is shown that it was encountered in the works of only Chaucer and Spenser and in each of their works it was found three times. However, it is important to be aware of the fact that this thesis is analysing a small number of examples. Even though Graph 4 suggests that this shift was practically non-existent during Skelton's and Shakespeare's eras, the reality could be very different. Even though I analysed almost 7 thousand lines of poetry, it could be by chance that I have not found more examples of this shift.



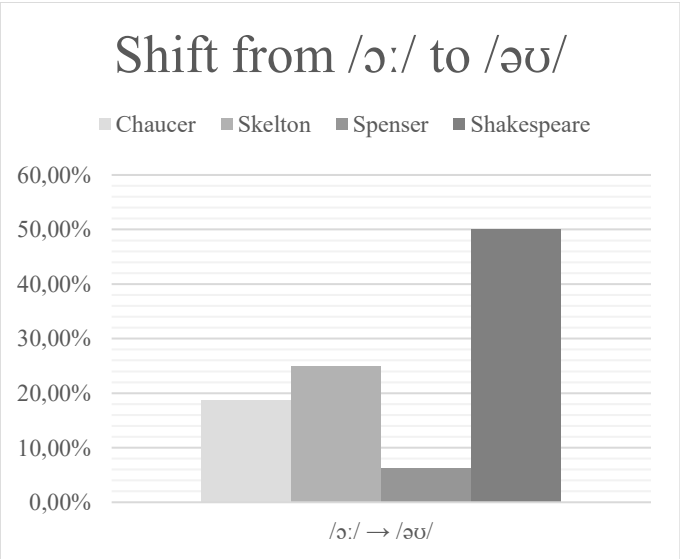
Graph 4: The percentual distribution of the shift from /uː/ to /aʊ/ in the works of the poets

In the Graph 5 below there is the distribution of the shift from /eː/ to /iː/. This has been the third most frequently encountered shift. From Graph 5 below it seems as if this specific shift has appeared at the beginning of the GVS and then declined rapidly by more than half. However, from Skelton onwards it was again gaining strength so it could be said that this specific vowel shift has started in the earlier stages of the GVS and gradually became more prominent.



Graph 5: The percentual distribution of the shift from /eː/ to /iː/ in the works of the poets

Graph 6 below shows the overview of the second most frequent shift which makes up 19 % of all the examples. In Graph 6 there does not seem to be any linear progress of the shift. There is a drop from 25 % in Skelton to just 6,25 % in Spenser and then a rapid increase to Shakespeare's 50 %. Here it is important to mention again that the graph only shows the 16 instances found during the analysis. With a bigger number of examples all of the graphs could look differently.



Graph 6: The percentual distribution of the shift from /ɔː/ to /əʊ/ in the works of the poets

5.1. Results in Relation to the Chronology of the Great Vowel Shift

The presumed chronology of the GVS in accordance with Brinton and Arnovick is illustrated in Table 14 below. The shift from /eː/ to /iː/ is presumed to be the first shift of the long stressed vowels to occur. However, /ɛː/ shifted to /eː/ in the 16th century so overall it might have taken this shift 4 centuries to finish. According to the results of my analysis and the results in Graph 5, the non-rhymes appeared quite a lot in Chaucer's poetry created in late 14th century, then it dropped in late 15th/early 16th century and rose again in 17th century. That might be due to the merger of /ɛː/ and its subsequent shift. The more non-rhymes I encountered the more likely it is that the shift has not started yet as the words are not shifted and rhyme with each other. When less non-rhymes were encountered it suggests that the shift has already happened or is happening at the time. This shift could therefore be seen as correctly represented in my analysis.

The shift from /aː/ to /eɪ/ has likely begun in the 14th century as well and because of a greater variety of changes has been developing until the 17th century. My result in Graph 2 supports this claim. The non-rhymes have appeared quite frequently in late 14th century, then there was a considerable drop in late 15th/early 16th century and gradual growth until early 17th century. This result could also be seen as successfully representing the development of the shift.

The diphthongizations of high vowels seem to have started in 15th century and finished its respective developments a century later. The lowering of the onset of the diphthong has taken place subsequently. According to Graph 3 which shows the distribution of the shift from /iː/ to /aɪ/, the non-rhymes can be found from late 14th century onwards but the peak appears to be in late 16th century, which corresponds to the final advancements in the shift. Graph 4, reflecting the shift from /uː/ to /aʊ/ would need more data to be more precise. It shows that the non-rhymes have appeared in late 14th century, i.e. before the presumed beginning of this shift, and then in late 16th century, which again corresponds to the final developments of the shift. With bigger variety of examples this shift could be represented better, but it can be seen as representing the peak of the shift correctly.

The shift from /oː/ to /uː/ seems to have both begun and ended in the 16th century. As I have not found any examples of this change in my analysis, my results do not correspond with the development of the shift. The shift from /ɔː/ to /əʊ/ seems to also have taken place during the 16th century. In Graph 6 above, it can be seen that the non-rhymes were found in late 14th and late 15th/early 16th century but then in late 16th century there is a considerable drop before a major increase in early 17th century. Overall, with the number of examples that I found this graph does not represent the presumed stages of the shift correctly.

	14th century	15th century	16th century	17th century
/aː/ → /eɪ/	/aː/ → /æː/	/æː/ → /ɛː/	/ɛː/ → /eː/	/eː/ → /eɪ/
/iː/ → /aɪ/		/iː/ → /ə͡ɪ/	/ə͡ɪ/ → /ə͡ɪ/	/aɪ/
/uː/ → /aʊ/		/uː/ → /ə͡ʊ/	/ə͡ʊ/ → /ə͡ʊ/	/aʊ/
/eː/ → /iː/	/eː/ → /iː/	/iː/	/iː/	/iː/
/ɛː/ → /iː/			/ɛː/ → /eː/	/eː/ → /iː/
/oː/ → /uː/			/oː/ → /uː/	/uː/
/ɔː/ → /əʊ/			/ɔː/ → /oː/ → /əʊ/	/əʊ/

Table 14: Presumed chronology of the GVS according to Brinton and Arnovick

5.2. Interpretation Difficulties

During my analysis I encountered many challenges. Probably the biggest one was the fact that the older spellings of certain words looked like different words in PDE. In Example 39 I confused the word *wreke* with *wreck* but in PDE the word is *wreak*, therefore it still rhymes. In Example 40 I mistook the word *meate* for *mate* but it is *meat* in PDE. In Example 41 I confused the word *lok* with *look* but in PDE it is *lock*.

Upon the tiraunt creon hem to wreke,
That al the peple of grece sholde speke

Example 39

Whan mamockes was your meate,
With moldy brede to eate ;
Ye cowde none other gete

Example 40

Youre key is mete for euery lok.
Youre key is redy we nede not knok.

Example 41

Other interpretation difficulties in my analysis include archaisms and dialects. The supposed rhymes might not necessarily rhyme in the poet's dialect or even in his era. The poets might have preferred an archaic form of a word to a form of a word in common use during the period in question if the readers could understand it and the same thing might have happened with dialects. They might have used certain words from other dialects which their readers could understand, but that do not fit into the standard scenarios of GVS. With distinct dialects there is an issue, however, that the words could have been pronounced differently.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of this thesis would have to be much larger to provide more conclusive results. When laying out the methodology of this thesis, more concluding findings were expected to be the result of the analysis. There were many examples that made the manual analysis harder, such as rhyming of final /ɪ/ sounds, etc. A number of interpretation difficulties, including dialects, archaisms and old spelling eliminated a number of incorrectly selected examples.

The main objective of this thesis was to exemplify the effects of the GVS and to try to demonstrate the chronology of the shift. The chronology of the GVS can be partly reconstructed based on the examples from the analysis but it cannot be reconstructed fully for a number of reasons, including the uncertainty whether the evidence of some shifts is more frequent due to the fact that the vowels involved were simply more preferred in rhyming positions by the given authors than other vowels. It is also important to note that the more non-rhymes I encountered in the given period, the more likely it is that the GVS has not appeared in that period yet. As the numbers of non-rhymes decreased, it could be argued that the GVS has already taken place or is taking place in the period in question. The main reason is that even though the chronology of some particular shifts is correctly represented in the results of the analysis, to have more precise results, a greater range of lines of poetry would have to be examined, possibly from a greater range of poets and periods. What might also help with getting more precise results would be not counting the total number of lines but rather counting the number of lines containing the particular vowels. That might result in more accurate numbers.

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Resumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývala Velkou hláskovou změnou, která ovlivnila angličtinu na Britských ostrovech přibližně v období mezi čtrnáctým a sedmnáctým stoletím. První část práce se zabývá teoretickým popisem Velké hláskové změny i následnou podobou anglického jazyka a neodpovídajícím vztahem mezi dobovou ortografií a výslovností slov po Velké hláskové změně. Zmíněn je i začátek Velké hláskové změny, u kterého se lingvisté neshodují v tom, zda byla prvním impulsem změna vysokých hlásek ve dvojhlásky, nebo zvýšení nízkých samohlásek. Následuje kapitola o vztahu Velké hláskové změny a poezie, což je důležitá spojnice celé práce, jelikož Velká hlásková změna se nejsnadněji určuje mimo jiné z dobové poezie.

V druhé části práce je popsán materiál a metoda, jakou byla analýza provedena. Materiálem jsou básně z různých na sebe navazujících období, ve kterých Velká hlásková změna probíhala. V této části lze nalézt krátké kapitoly uvádějící všechny čtyři básníky analyzované v této práci. V metodologické části je popsáno, jakým stylem probíhala analýza. Ruční analýza jednotlivých básní probíhala v excelu za pomoci vzorců. Bylo důležité správně rozlišit použitelné a nepoužitelné příklady a určit, proč daný příklad použitelný není.

Ve třetí části práce je popsána samotná analýza příkladů s podrobným rozpisem změn jednotlivých slov a případnými komplikacemi u jejich určování. Ve čtvrté části práce lze nalézt grafy, které byly vytvořeny na základě výsledků analýzy. Tyto grafy obsahují percentuálně zastoupení jednotlivých změn v dílech jednotlivých básníků, potažmo v jednotlivých časových obdobích. Tyto výsledky byly dále srovnány s předpokládanou datací Velké hláskové změny tak, jak ji navrhují Brinton a Arnovick.

Chronologie vyšla podobně zhruba u poloviny příkladů, avšak u některých grafů by bylo třeba analýzu značně rozšířit, aby vyšly více průkazné výsledky. U jedné změny vyšel graf z výsledků jinak, než by se dalo očekávat, takže nereflektuje předpokládaný vývoj Velké hláskové změny. Jelikož jedna hlásková změna nebyla v analýza zastoupena vůbec, nebylo možné tuto změnu jakkoliv datovat.

Jak bylo již zmíněno, aby se daly získat průkaznější výsledky, bylo by třeba analýzu rozšířit o větší množství dobové poezie. Jedním možným řešením, jak získat průkaznější výsledky z aktuální analýzy by bylo nepočítat procenta z celkového počtu zanalyzovaných řádků, ale spíše rozdělit řádky podle samohlásek které obsahují a percentuální zastoupení vypočítat z těchto čísel.

Appendix

So pure and innocent, as that same lambe,
And by descent from Royall lynage came

Example 1

Ioying to heare the birdes sweete harmony,
Seemd in their song to scorne the cruell sky.
Much can they prayse the trees so straight and hy,
The vine-prop Elme, the Poplar neuer dry,

Example 2

Tho wrapping vp her wrethed sterne arownd,
All suddenly about his body wound,

Example 3

They saw so rudely falling to the ground,
Gathred themselues about her body round,
Weening their wonted entrance to haue found
They flocked all about her bleeding wound,

Example 4

Approcht in hast to greet his victorie,
Who see your vanquisht foes before you lye:
Well worthy be you of that Armorie,
And proou'd your strength on a strong enimie,

Example 5

And homebred euill ye desire to heare,
That wasteth all this countrey farre and neare.
Of such (said he) I chiefly do inquere,
In which that wicked wight his dayes doth weare:

Example 6

Legions of Sprights, the which like little flyes
A-waite whereto their seruice he applyes,
To aide his friends, or fray his enimies:
And fittest for to forge true-seeming lyes;

Example 7

No other noyse, nor peoples troublous cryes,
Might there be heard: but carelesse Quiet lyes,
Wrapt in eternall silence farre from enemyes.

Example 8

Yet thus perforce he bids me do, or die.
You, whom my hard auenging destinie
Hath made iudge of my life or death indifferently.

Example 9

Forthwith he runnes with feigned faithfull hast
And dreames, gan now to take more sound repast,

Example 10

Returning to his bed in torment great,
He could not rest, but did his stout heart eat,

Example 11

Snatcheth his sword, and fiercely to him flies;
Each others equall puissaunce enuies,
And through their iron sides with cruell spies
No foote to foe. The flashing fier flies

Example 12

The bleeding bough did thrust into the ground,
And with fresh clay did close the wooden wound:
Then turning to his Lady, dead with feare her found.

Example 13

Or through alleageance and fast fealtie,
Feele my heart perst with so great agonie,
When such I see, that all for pittie I could die.

Example 14

A ramping Lyon rushed suddainly,
Soone as the royall virgin he did spy,
With gaping mouth at her ran greedily,
But to the pray when as he drew more ny,

Example 15

With quaking hands, and other signs of feare:
Gan shut the dore. By this arriued there
Dame Vna, wearie Dame, and entrance did requere.

Example 16

That for his loue refused deitie;
Still seeking him, that from her still did flie,
Then furthest from her hope, when most she weened nie.

Example 17

With hollow howling, and lamenting cry,
And her accusing of dishonesty,
That was the flowre of faith and chastity;
That plagues, and mischiefs, and long misery

Example 18

And cry, and curse, and raile, and rend her heare,
That causd her shed so many a bitter teare,
And so forth told the story of her feare:
And after for that Ladie did inquere;

Example 19

Yet chylde ne kinsman liuing had he none
To get, and nightly feare to lose his owne,
He led a wretched life vnto him selfe vnknowne.

Example 20

His cause in combat the next day to try:
To be aueng'd each on his enimy.
That night they pas in ioy and iollity,
For Steward was excessiue Gluttonie,

Example 21

He liues, that shall him pay his dewties last,
And guiltie Elfin bloud shall sacrifice in hast.

Example 22

And heaped blowes like yron hammers great:
The knight was fiers, and full of youthly heat:
And doubled strokes, like dreaded thunders threat:
Both stricken strike, and beaten both do beat,

Example 23

Thy selfe thy message doe to german deare,
Goe say, his foe thy shield with his doth beare.
Therewith his heauie hand he high gan reare,
Vpon him fell: he no where doth appeare,

Example 24

That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
His tender heir might bear his memory:

Example 25

For having traffic with thy self alone,
Then how when nature calls thee to be gone,

Example 26

Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
Serving with looks his sacred majesty;

Example 27

Cheered and checked even by the self-same sky,
And wear their brave state out of memory;

Example 28

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled,
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,

Example 29

I summon up remembrance of things past,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:

Example 30

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,

Example 31

Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;

Example 32

Ah! but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
And they are rich and ransom all ill deeds.

Example 33

To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
I must attend time's leisure with my moan,

Example 34

For when these quicker elements are gone
My life, being made of four, with two alone

Example 35

With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,

Example 36

O! what excuse will my poor beast then find,
Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind,

Example 37

For such a time do I now fortify
That he shall never cut from memory

Example 38

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,

Example 39

Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

Example 40

Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.

Example 41

Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
The earth can yield me but a common grave,

Example 42

If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
But in the onset come: so shall I taste

Example 43

Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,
Which three till now, never kept seat in one.

Example 44

So all their praises are but prophecies
And for they looked but with divining eyes,

Example 45

Not wondering at the present nor the past,
Made more or less by thy continual haste.

Example 46

When I break twenty? I am perjured most;
And all my honest faith in thee is lost:

Example 47

This brand she quenched in a cool well by,
Growing a bath and healthful remedy,

Example 48

Not making worse what nature made so clear,
Making his style admired every where.

Example 49

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
And will, thy soul knows, is admitted there;

Example 50

In lyste thries, and ay slayn his foo.
This ilke worthy knyght hadde been also

Example 51

Curteis he was, lowely and servysáble,
And carf biforn his fader at the table.

Example 52

Of yonge wommen at his owene cost.
Unto his ordre he was a noble post.

Example 53

Wo was his cook but if his sauce were
Poynaunt and sharp, and redy al his geere.

Example 54

With us ther was a Doctour of Phisik;
In all this world ne was ther noon hym lik,

Example 55

He knew the cause of everich maladye,
Were it of hoot, or cold, or moyste, or drye,

Example 56

In siknesse nor in meschief to visíte
The ferreste in his parisshe, muche and lite,

Example 57

But it were any persone obstinat,
What so he were, of heigh or lough estat,

Example 58

That weren of lawe expert and curious,
Of whiche ther weren a duszeyne in that hous

Example 59

Tukked he was as is a frere, aboute.
And evere he rood the hyndreste of oure route.

Example 60

Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie;
Ay "Questio quid juris" wolde he crie.

Example 61

No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late y-shave;

Example 62

Ne thogh I speke hir wordes proprely.
For this ye knowen al-so wel as I,

Example 63

For by my trouthe, if that I shal nat lye,
I saugh nat this yeer so myrie a compaignye

Example 64

To Caunterbury-ward, I mene it so,
And homward he shal tellen othere two,

Example 65

And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
I wolde have toold yow fully the manere

Example 66

I wol nat letten eek noon of this route;
Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,

Example 67

Quod theseus. Have ye so greet envye
Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crye?

Example 68

Two yonge knyghtes liggynge by and by,
Bothe in oon armes, wroght ful richely,

Example 69

Nat fully quyke, ne fully dede they were,
But by hir cote-armures and by hir gere

Example 70

Pla ce bo,
Who is there, who?

Example 71

Together with servauntes of his famuly,
Of whos /life/ they counted not a flye;
Take up whose wold, for ther they let him ly.

Example 72

And, as the lyone, whiche is of bestes kynge,
Unto thy subjectes by curteis and benygne.

Example 73

You I assure, absens is my fo,
And if ye lyst to know the cause why so,

Example 74

Thy lust and liking is from thee gone;
Behold thou liest, luggard, alone!

Example 75

For to the castell of Norham
I understonde to soone ye cam,

Example 76

The grace of the Holy Gost :
Thus they make theyr bost
Through owte euery cost,

Example 77

Some can not scarsly rede,
And yet he wyll not drede

Example 78

And lewdely sayes by Christ
Agaynst the sely preest.

Example 79

Lepe ouer lakes and dykes,
Set nothyng by polytykes ;

Example 80

And can tell no cause why,
But that I wryte trewly.

Example 81

The Kynges Benche or Marshalsy,
Haue hym thyder by and by !

Example 82

And some of you shall dye,
Lyke holy Jeremy ;

Example 83